

The CROATIAN Shepherd who is the Art Sensation of the Day

Ivan Mestrovic's "One Man Show" Called Only Work That Does Not Seem Alien to These Mighty Days.

IVAN MESTROVIC, a Croatian peasant-shepherd, is the only being in the world today producing art that does not seem alien to these mighty days.

At least this is the verdict of London, which has recently been viewing his astounding work in a gallery that has been given over entirely to his sculptures.

He is the art champion of the Croats, a people related to the Serbians, and under the control of Austria-Hungary, who fought a battle a thousand years long to secure their freedom from foreign domination without having yet won it.

In his sculptures it is said that Mestrovic, the companion of young Serbo-Croat revolutionaries, was inspired by "a single fury of national memories and aspirations that is without parallel in modern art."

His art patriotism, according to the critics, has a burning spirit within it that seems to throb and gesture through his sculptures as a tempest speaks through the new and fantastic shapes it gives to the trees in its grasp or the announcements of the tongues and crowns of flame in a forest conflagration.

"A terrible long suppressed fury is felt boiling up in these twisted, knotted figures and swelling national images," says the art critic James Bone, in speaking of the shepherd's work. "In these sculptures Mestrovic delivers his testaments. His work has the daemonic urgency of archaic art and the entranced singleness of the Italian Primitives. His message is delivered with the immediacy of Fra Angelico."

Another inspiration of Mestrovic was the noble and vivid folk song of his country and something of the starkness and grandeur and terrible silhouettes of the wild hills of his native land seems to remain in his work. The spectator thinks of his art rather as feeling what he has to say than of clothing it in forms of beauty.

It is not always that the world of fashion and the world of art of London are found making pilgrimages to the same shrine but the rugged power and unconventionality of the work of Mestrovic is attracting society and art lovers in battalions to the Victoria and Albert museum where it is being shown. There they gaze, wonder at and admire the remarkable sculptures which show a power and daring rarely seen except in the greatest geniuses.

Most of the reliefs illustrated are not casts but have been carved directly on the plaster, to which fact they owe their strong sense of vigor and a directness which is not looked for in a reproduction. The hand of the artist is seen in every line and the power evidenced in the treatment of his subjects is characteristic of the inspiring influence, the original conception and the unflinching strength of the artist.

His early work was wood carving, the elements of which he learned from his father, and traces of this technique can still be seen in some of the reliefs in their sheer cut outline and the character of the decorative shallow cuttings on the chief surfaces.

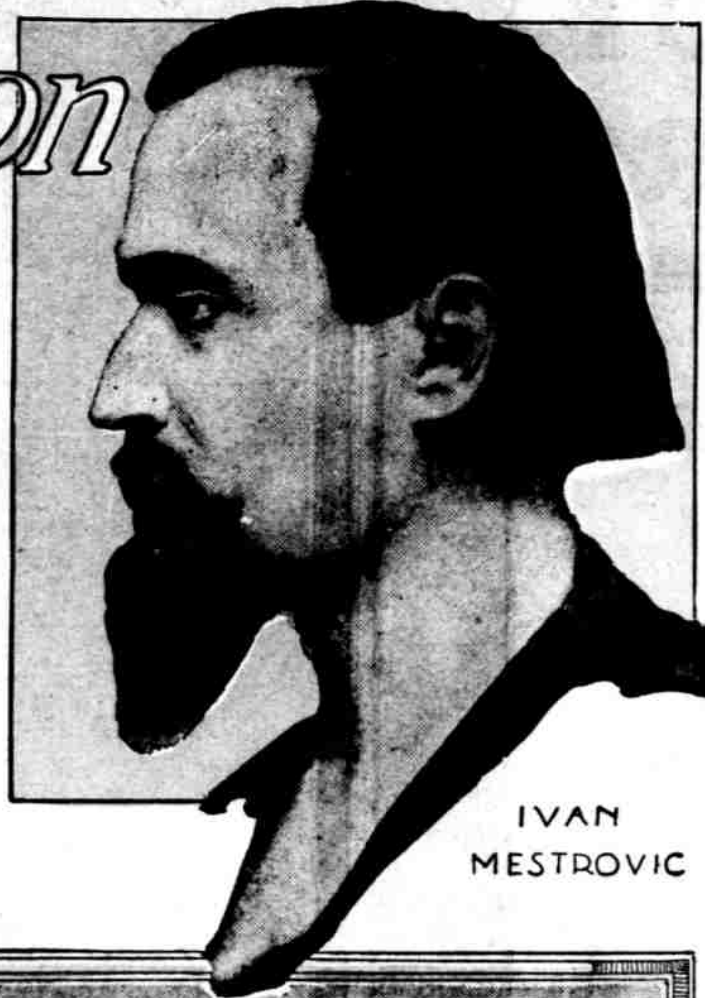
Mestrovic was born in 1883 of a peasant family in Otavice, and even as a shepherd boy he revealed a talent by carving decorative figures in wood and stone. Serbo-Croat popular poetry inspired his first serious efforts, which took the heads of modern Croat patriots for models. At eighteen he was apprenticed to a marble worker in Spalato and later studied at the Academy of Arts in Vienna. His art has always been heroic and significant of the unconquerable spirit of the Croats, who have waged a heartbreaking and losing battle against being swallowed up by other nations. His whole inspiration comes from the Croats and their history.

It is a history that has been a long, sad, tortuous one. From time immemorial the land of the Croats has been

dominated by first one nation and then another. The Romans conquered Croatia in 35 B. C. When the Roman dominions were broken up in A. D. 395 Croatia re-



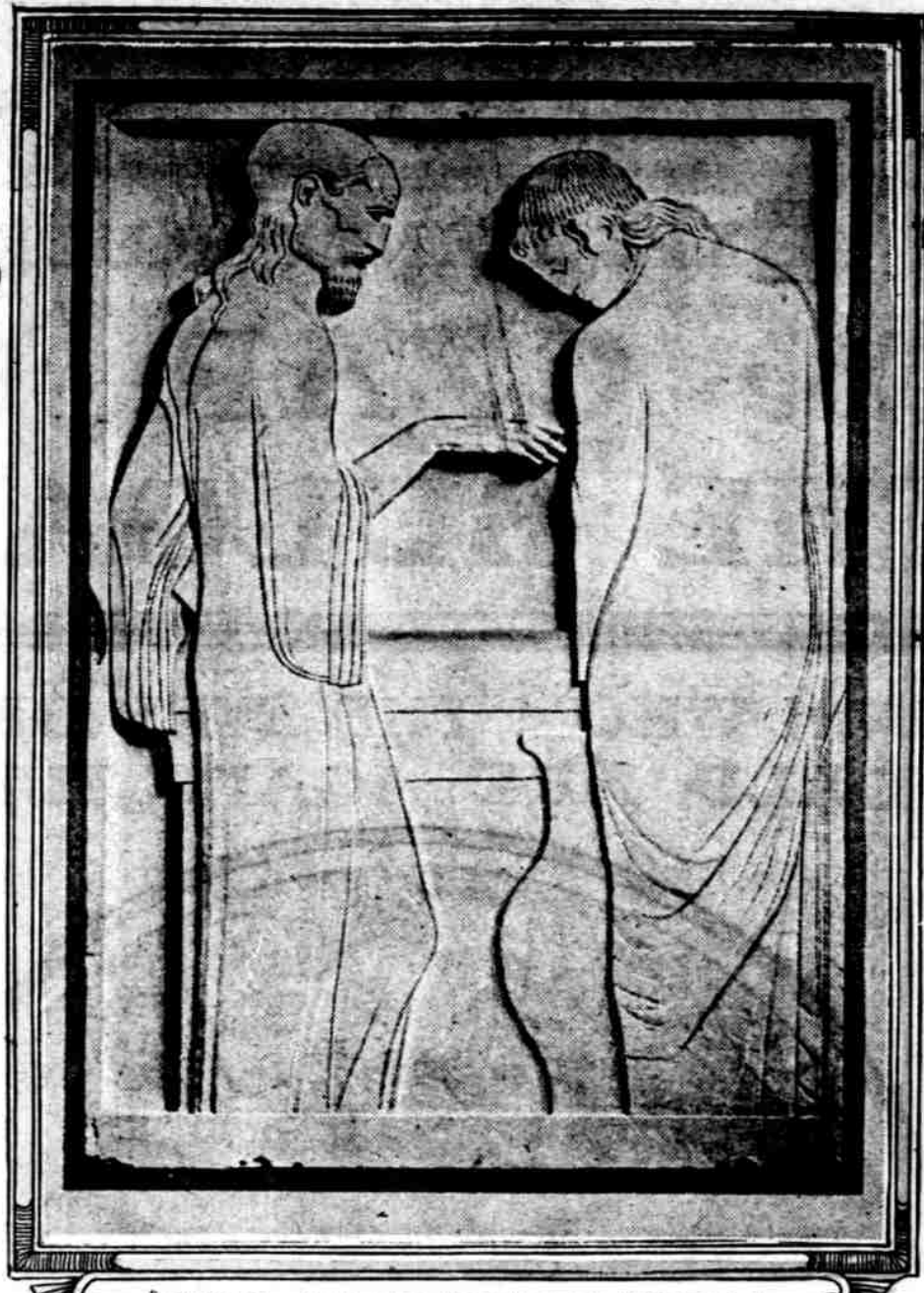
"SRGJA ZLOPOGLEDJA": THIS ANGRY HERO OF THE FROWN, WHO SPITS SIX TURKS UPON HIS LANCE



IVAN MESTROVIC



"THE ANNUNCIATION"



"CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA"

mained part of the western empire. The Ostrogoths overran it in 489. Justinian annexed it in 535 and in 568 it was conquered by the Avars.

Then came the Croats, a Slavonic people, from the western Carpathians. The main body of these people entered Croatia about 634 and were encouraged by the Emperor Heraclius to attack the Avars. They occupied most of the region now known as Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia and part of Bosnia, displacing or absorbing the earlier inhabitants everywhere.

Along with them the Croats brought their tribal institutions of primitive times, organized on a partly military basis and partly patriarchal. Their chief pursuits were agriculture, war and hunting.

Although they at first acknowledged no alien sovereign they passed gradually under Italian influence in the extreme west and under Byzantine influence in the south and east. After being temporarily subdued by the Byzantine emperor in 877 the Croats went through a number of successive revolutions and insurrections and finally attained enough power for themselves to found a national kingdom about 910. The record of this period which gave the Croats their own king is regarded by many Croats as the golden age of their country.

The next step in the progress of the Croats as a nation was to build a fleet, which they used first for piracy and then for trade. Their skill in maritime affairs is remarkable in a Slavonic people who have so recently migrated from central Europe. Their power on the sea grew to such an extent that in the tenth century they even extorted a slight tribute from Venice. In the year 1000 their power was temporarily destroyed when the Venetians conquered and destroyed Belgrade. This city was not only the Croatian arsenal but the seat of their kings.

Almost a hundred years later Ladislaus I, king of Hungary, took possession of the country and introduced Hungarian laws. After his death the Croats rebelled, but his successor reconquered them. This monarch reorganized the administration on a system which has been maintained almost to the present day with minor modifications. He respected the existing institutions of the conquered and delegated his authority as king to an

official known as the ban. This office has generally been held by some Croatian noble.

Things went fairly well under this arrangement until 1322, when the Croatian nobles successfully withstood the Hungarian armies and secured what amounted to practical independence for their land. In 1526, however, the Turks moved upon the Croats and rapidly brought them into subjection after having destroyed the power of Hungary.

After the waning of the Turkish power all through Europe Austrian influence predominated throughout Croatia-Slavonia during most of the eighteenth century. Then Napoleon came along with his conquests and Austria was obliged to surrender to him a large part of the Croat country. It remained under French rule until 1813, when it again came under the dominion of Austria as an appanage of the Hungarian crown.

Since 1840, when the Magyars endeavored to introduce Hungarian as the official language, the Croats have been politically active with an activity which at times has amounted to insurrection. In 1848 the Croats crossed the Drave and proceeded against Hungary, but their army was defeated a few days later and driven back towards Vienna. Austria then took affairs into her own hands and declared Croatia and Slavonia separated from Hungary and a single Austrian crownland.

Again the seasaw went the other way when, after several years of partisan bickering, Hungary secured control of the political machinery of the country and in 1867 secured action from the Croatian diet which united that country with Croatia. In later years the Croats received representation in the Hungarian parliament and what practically amounted to independence.

But beginning with 1875 the agitation for a "Great Croatia" was begun and in the years that followed came numerous riots, revolts and insurrections. As late as 1909 fifty-seven nationalist leaders were tried for high treason. The policy of the nationalists in late years has been to bring about a political union of all Serbo-Croats in Austria-Hungary. Austria has opposed it as tending to create a new and formidable Slavonic nation within the dual monarchy and Hungary has objected to it as a menace to her predominance over the countries affected.

Liverpool Artist Uses Saw Only in Making Statuettes of War Heroes

ALONG with its horrors the war that Europe is waging has produced many strange things. Apparently realizing that the world is much more in need of cheer and of laughs at the present time than it is in times when everything is running smoothly, the humorists, the cartoonists and others of their stripe have been particularly busy and have turned out extraordinary things.

But nothing apparently has been so strange and extraordinary as the caricatures in wood which E. Carter Preston, a Liverpool artist, has produced. All London is laughing over them.

Preston himself calls his exhibit a collection of "polychrome models." He saws his figures out of wood blocks by hand and then colors them highly in a striking variety of tones.

A London wag has referred to these creations as "Wise Saws—From the Wood." A paper in commenting on the exhibition referred to the figures as "slices from life in the form of cartoons and caricatures." Taken altogether they are the best war art that England has yet produced.

As can be seen by the reproduction, the models are ingeniously constructed. The vein of satire is broad rather than bitter and beneath it all is a sense of individuality, technical knowledge, and no little unconventionality. Preston might use the words of an English poet and say "my eyes make pictures when they are shut." Some of his imaginings done into wood suggest the whimsical faces and figures seen in the fire as flames burn low and the red coals glow and fall into grotesque, suggestive shapes.

The saw has been the one tool used by the



K. OF K. AND THE B. B. OR IN OTHER WORDS A CARICATURED KITCHENER AND THE BRITISH BULLDOG.



GENERAL JOFFRE, THE HERO OF FRANCE, AND THE GALLIC COCK, THE NATIONAL EMBLEM.



THE FAMOUS GENERAL VON HINDENBURG DONE IN WOOD AFTER THE ASSYRIAN STYLE.



THE ELONGATED AND GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS WITH A BODY GUARD UP TO HIS KNEES.

artist. Every figure in the exhibition shows what the thinking hand can do with the saw. One may ask of course, why use the saw and what is the especial merit of this technique? Why cut a number of slices of wood and build up a figure from them? And why should not each of these models have

been carved out of a solid piece of wood? The answer is very simple. By this technique the artist can exactly reproduce as many copies of his model as he feels he can put together and color without loss of artistic quality. A manufacturer of such things could, of course, produce an unlimited

number. But the artist knows that there is a limit beyond which in purely fanciful designs his work of delicate adjustment and coloring, on both of which depends the artistic excellence of his creation, may suffer.

It is to be noticed that the wood is worked in

planes. It is of course the obvious way of working wood when the saw is the tool used. The final result is a certain squareness. But it is a squareness with an effect that is nothing less than dramatic. It casts a gleam of beauty on one model, a flash of fun on another and a glow of dignity on others.